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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb022_f0044

SourceBoite_022-1-chem | Noces spirituelles [rayé : Chair (Antiquité) Virginité]

LangueFrançais

TypePhotocopie

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

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rough interpretation of the longstanding tradition (based on *Gen.* 4, 1), that there was no room for marriage in Paradise. He also shows his acquaintance with the other tradition that marriage was invented (*ἐπενοήθη*) outside Paradise, as a consolation for death (*παράμυθία τοῦ ἀποθνήσκειν* 12, 4), but he nowhere explicitly says that it is a way, however inferior, of overcoming death, providing *ἀθανασία* (Plato, Clement, Basil of Ancyra) or an (image of) the resurrection (Demas and Hermogenes in APT^h, Hippolytus on the Sadducees—and perhaps the Sadducees themselves—, Sextus Julius on the levirate, John Chrysostom). Nor does he underscore so much as Basil and John that marriage was necessitated by man's mortality. On the contrary, in order to emphasize the contrast between marriage and virginity, Gregory takes up the view of EvEg that marriage gives nourishment to death. It should be noticed, that Gregory, like Basil of Ancyra before him, also opposes marriage and virginity as two opposite kinds of fruitfulness: the former being a life after the flesh bears fruit for death; and birth after the flesh contains in itself the principle of its dissolution. But for those who have left this life after the flesh and have the communion with the Spirit (*τῆς πρὸς τὸ πνεῦμα κοινωνίας*), *ζωή* and *ἀφθαρσία* take the place of mortal bodies (13, 3); they conceive the incorruptibility of the Spirit (*τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν τοῦ πνεύματος*) and bring forth "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption" (1 *Cor.* 1, 30; 14, 3)⁷³. Here again Gregory transposes pauline terminology to characterize the contrast between marriage and virginity, and plays on the ambiguity of such words as life, death and corruption. But there can be no doubt that virginity means the victory over both physical and spiritual death⁷⁴: it both cuts short the power of *θάνατος* and gives *ἀφθαρσία*, the latter being characteristic for the divine (2, 1 and 5; 4, 8; 11, 5); in a certain sense, virginity deifies, the virgins are made familiar with God by their *ἀφθαρσία* (1, 20–25); true virginity and the zeal for incorruptibility (*ἡ περὶ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν σπουδή*) both lead to the contemplation of God (11, 6). Those who abandon marriage are, in a way, beyond time, death and corruption, and dwell in the presence of God. So the virgins appear to put an end to physical death (*θάνατος*, but also *φθορά*, 14, 1) insofar as they do not give it nourishment by engendering children, and to possess incorruptibility (*ἀφθαρσία*, not *ἀθανασία*) meaning nearness to God: these two effects have to be carefully distinguished, as in Basil of Ancyra's *De Virg.*, albeit with at least one notable difference: as Gregory does not speak of marriage as a way to *ἀθανασία* (= the overcoming of physical death), he does not contrast it with virginity as the superior way to this goal, as Basil did; as a matter of fact, he never uses the word *ἀθανασία*, neither for virginity nor for marriage⁷⁵. The reason for this is that Gregory practically ignores this aspect of marriage, though it had received attention of many a theologian before him: he rather follows the line of EvEg with its negative attitude towards marriage.

Can Gregory of Nyssa be seen as a representative of the platonic conception of marriage and begetting? As we have just shown, he does not consider marriage as giving *ἀθανασία*; on the other hand, he calls it a consolation for death (12, 4). The term *παράμυθία* is also used by Basil of Ancyra and John Chrysostom (who speak in this context of *ἀθανασία* or *ἀνάστασις*); but it is hardly possible to see in this statement more than a very far echo of Plato's *Symp.* and *Nom*⁷⁶.

73. Marriage and virginity and their respective offspring are opposed as *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα*; Gregory refers to such a basic text as *John* 3, 6,—another text that originally concerned the transition from unbelief to faith (from death to life, etc.), and is here applied on the opposition of marriage and virginity.

74. See AUBINEAU's notes, p. 428, n. 2–3, p. 433, n. 6.

75. The adjective *ἀθάνατος* is used only twice in the context of (the fruits of) virginity, in 13, 2 and 3.

76. Cf. AUBINEAU, *o.c.* p. 139: the idea is "d'inspiration platonicienne"; in n. 4 on p. 421, however, he sees a much closer parallel in Greg. Naz. *In laudem virg.* 124 (PG 37, 531): καὶ γάμος, ἀνδρομέτης γενεῆς φόνος, ἄλκαρ ὀλέθρου.

